

# Reading School's British Values





## British Values

What does it mean to have ‘British values’? Britain today is a complex place, full of different lifestyles and full of contradictions. In a community like Reading School the changes Britain has undergone throughout its history, but particularly in recent times, are reflected, recognised, and understood. We appreciate the things that make Britain great. We also appreciate the problems Britain faces.

We commit to upholding what is good about Britain, and also to challenging what is bad. This is the key to Reading School’s approach to British values—which is part of an open-minded dialogue that considers and tolerates all sides, and that strives to establish and cement a fair, free, and fraternal society.

We reject intolerance and forms of radicalisation (of any kind: religious, nationalist, political, racial, sexual) that seek to undermine the liberty and sacrosanct dignity of individuals, the harmony of the group, and the productivity of our community.

We embrace our responsibilities to one another and to the rules that govern the life of our society. We seek to engage with the world around us, and to shape it in the image of love and understanding that we have been such grateful beneficiaries of.

## Mutual Tolerance

Britain is a place where many different cultures, religions, races, and groups have lived and cooperated with each other throughout history. As time has gone on, Britain has become increasingly diverse and multicultural—it is now a place where difference is not only tolerated, but celebrated.

At Reading School we inhabit a diverse community—with students and staff coming from a panoply of ethnic, religious, national, and socio-economic contexts. Our strength is in our depth. We are able to learn from each other; and together we have developed a more productive, creative, and inclusive learning environment.

Tolerance of other people, and respect for their way of life, is the only fundamentalism we can adhere to. We reject those who seek to undermine the balance of our community; and we intend to nurture this culture of openness through informed debate, discussion, and reflection.

‘Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one’s own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others.’

John F. Kennedy.

## Democracy

In Britain we are blessed to live in a democracy. Many people around the world are not so privileged: they are deprived of their basic human rights, and face a struggle to change the way their systems work.

Living in a democracy comes with responsibilities: we have a duty to engage with the world around us, and to lead future change. Reading School staff and students have a thirst for information, a creative approach to problem-solving, and an advanced ability to express ourselves. These tendencies are no good by themselves; they must be harnessed to enact the change we wish to see in the world around us.

This means we must adopt responsibility for our actions. It also means we must adopt responsibilities for those in our communities who need us. Contributing positively to the lives of others is a prerogative we at Reading School embrace whole-heartedly.

‘You must be the change you wish to see in the world.’

Mahatma Gandhi.

## Individual Liberty

Individuals must be given the freedom to decide what they make of their own lives. The dignity and liberty of individuals is paramount at Reading School. We believe that everyone deserves a stake in the pursuit of happiness, and we commit to protecting that right.

We cherish the development of unique personalities—understanding that each member of our community is different, and can contribute to the whole organism in a special way. We strongly believe that the rights of individuals must not be impeded—and that it is our responsibility to respond should we feel that they are.

We understand that our place within a unique, selective community is a privilege. But we also undertake to ensure that membership of this community is not determined by forces other than individual merit. We hold that membership of a particular group does not make us blind to the values and merits of others.

‘I should have loved freedom, I believe, at all times, but in the time in which we live I am ready to worship it.’

Alexis de Tocqueville.

## The Rule of Law

Justice and equality are values that we strive for in Britain and in Reading School. We understand that the law is paramount in securing the peaceful, fraternal, democratic society in which we have prospered. Without rules that codify the freedoms we believe in, these freedoms are put in jeopardy. As such, we are committed to upholding the rule of law and defer to the public bodies that institute it.

We respect the need for civil and criminal law in wider British society. We also understand that certain laws apply within the school community. In order to preserve the educational environment we have built at Reading School, we understand that deference must be shown to our seniors—but that equity must also exist across age groups.

By abiding to the rule of law within and outside school, we believe that the development of our community and the individuals within it will proceed at its optimum pace.

‘The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom.’

John Locke.

